

District 108 - Re: HB5192 Committee on Conservation, Forestry and Outdoor Recreation Hearing of 11-10-05

From: District 108
To: "rampart_medic52@yahoo.com".GWIA.mihouse
Subject: Re: HB5192 Committee on Conservation, Forestry and Outdoor Recreation Hearing of 11-10-05

TO: HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES

SUBJECT: Bill To Reduce Minimum Age For Deer and Bear Hunting

My name is Jim Dabb, W7424 Sturgeon Road, Sagola, MI 49881, located in the Central Upper Peninsula. I am here today representing the Northwoods Chapter of Safari Club International. I am one of the founders of this Chapter and in my 4th term as its President. I also have been asked by the leadership of the Northern Michigan Wildlife Relief organization, the Sagola Township Sportsmen's Club and the Upper Peninsula Bear Houndsmen Association to represent them at this hearing.

I am a retired MI Conservation Officer, having retired from the MI DNR in 1991 after serving 25 years. During my career as a C.O. I was an active Hunter Education Instructor, starting in 1966, and administered the Hunter Education Program for the MI DNR from January 1980 until late August 1989. Since retirement I have continued my involvement in the Hunter Education Program as a Volunteer Instructor and as a staff member for the MI DNR Hunter Education Volunteer Instructor Academy that I started in 1980.

As part of my many duties as the H.E. Program Administrator I compiled and reviewed all hunting accident reports from MI and, if needed, made H.E. Program changes based on that data. The DNR also made recommendations for law changes based on that data, such as the Hunter Orange Law.

Also, as the MI DNR Hunter Education Program Administrator I was an active member of the International Hunter Education Association, serving as a Board Member, Vice-President and President and was inducted into their Hunter Education Hall of Fame. As their Hunting Accident Committee Chairman for several years I compiled Hunting Accident Data for all of North America.

Since my retirement I have done some work as an Expert Witness in several court cases which were the result of hunting accidents and have been recognized as a Firearms Safety Expert by several courts in Michigan and Ohio.

In preparation for this hearing I contacted the MI DNR Hunter Education Administrator, Lt. Sherry Chandler, and reviewed hunting accident data for the years 1999 – 2003. This data showed the following:

- 1999. No accidents involving 12 or 13 year old hunters.
- 2000. No accidents involving 12 or 13 year old hunters.
- 2001. 1 accident involving a 13 year old hunter who had not completed a Hunter Education Class; the injury was self inflicted; the animal being hunted was a deer during the closed season in violation of the law; no indication if the youth was supervised.
- 2002. 1 accident involving a 12 year old hunter who had completed a Hunter Education Class; the animal being hunted was a deer during the closed season in violation of the law; the fatal accident was self-inflicted; no indication if the youth was supervised.

1 accident involving an 11 year old hunter who had not completed a Hunter Education Class; the injury was self-inflicted; the animal being hunted was a deer in violation of the law; no indication if the youth was supervised

2003. 1 accident involving a 13 year old hunter who had completed a Hunter

Hunter Education Class; the injury was self-inflicted; the animal being hunted was squirrel; no indication if the youth was supervised.

I do not have data to show what percentage of MI hunters are 12-13 years old, however I believe that maybe available from the MI DNR.

It is my belief that with the Hunter Education Programming we have today, and with direct/immediate supervision by adults, that 12 and 13 year old young people may safely enter the firearm deer, bear and elk hunting ranks. Other MI DNR Volunteer Hunter Education Instructors that I have spoken with regarding this Bill also agree.

There should be no increase in costs to the DNR as most of these young people will already be taking the classes. By holding this to the 12 year old mark, the Volunteer Instructor force will be able to continue their teaching without any changes as they already are working with this age group. The materials used are written at the 5th/6th grade level, so no re-write will be necessary and no increase in program costs for the Department. There may be some increase in license revenue for the DNR.

On behalf of the Northwoods Chapter SCI, Northern Michigan Wildlife Relief, the Sagola Township Sportsmen's Club and the Upper Peninsula Bear Houndsmen Association I respectfully request your support.

Thank you for permitting me to share my views on this matter.

James Dabb

Northwoods Chapter SCI President

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